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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 09 TEL AVIV 001648

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STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XXXX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
USCINCENT MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO FOR ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- [1](#). Mideast
- [2](#). Iran: Nuclear Program
- [3](#). Iraq

Key stories in the media:

Ha'aretz reported that Interim PM Ehud Olmert will meet with President Bush on May 23.

Israel Radio reported that this morning, two members of Islamic Jihad were killed and three other Palestinians were wounded in an IDF targeted assassination operation in Deir el-Balah in the southern Gaza Strip.

All media reported that on Wednesday, the PA thwarted an attempt by the Popular Resistance Committees to blow up the Karni cargo terminal between the Gaza Strip and Israel with 500 kg of explosives. The media reported that two attempts to attack troops of the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) in Sinai failed. The Jerusalem Post reported that the state told the High Court of Justice on Wednesday that the Palestinians have only themselves to blame for the fact that Israel shuts down the Karni crossing as often as it does and that, as a result, the local population suffers. Israel Radio cited the London-based newspaper Al-Hayat that Palestinian forces uncovered a tunnel that may have been used to attempt to assassinate former PA minister Muhammad Dahlan.

Leading media report that on Wednesday, Olmert decided to order the completion of the separation fence, in particular the "Jerusalem envelope," by the end of the year. However, The Jerusalem Post reported that Olmert declined to institute a deadline for the completion of the Jerusalem fence. The media reported that Olmert ordered the gaps in the "Jerusalem envelope" sealed with a temporary fence immediately.

Maariv and The Jerusalem Post reported that on Wednesday, during his visit to Norway, PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas called for the convening of an international conference on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Jerusalem Post quoted Arab League Secretary-General Amr Moussa as saying that the time

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for Abbas's proposal had not come. The Jerusalem Post reported that Asaf Shariv, a spokesman for Olmert, categorically rejected Abbas's idea, saying that no summit would take place until the PA reins in terrorism.

In its lead story, Ha'aretz quoted Maj. Gen. Amos Yadlin, the head of the IDF Intelligence Branch, as saying Wednesday at a public appearance that Iran has purchased ground-to-ground missiles from North Korea with a range of 2,500 km. Yadlin was quoted as saying that some of the missiles have already arrived in Iran. Major media reported that on Wednesday, Iran's Supreme

Leader Ali Khamenei threatened the US with worldwide strikes, were it to attack Iran. Israel Radio noted that the UN Security Council's ultimatum to Iran regarding its uranium-enrichment program will expire Friday. Israel Radio reported that on Wednesday, the US House of Representatives passed, with a large majority, a bill that would tighten sanctions against Iran.

Labor Party MK Ephraim Sneh was quoted as saying in an interview with The Jerusalem Post that under Amir Peretz's leadership, the Defense Ministry will wield a strong hand against settlers who violently resist government policy, and that Peretz would also cease to turn a blind eye to illegal building in the West Bank. Major media (banner in Maariv) cited the intention of Yisrael Beiteinu Avigdor Lieberman not to join Ehud Olmert's government. Maariv quoted him as saying that the new government has no future and that the Labor Party will only bring subversion. All media reported that on Wednesday, the Pensioners' Party (Gil) became the first party to sign a coalition agreement with Kadima. According to the agreement, the Pensioners and Kadima will operate as one 36-MK parliamentary bloc. Israel Radio reported that Kadima is expected to sign coalition agreements today with the Labor Party, Shas, and United Torah Judaism.

Major media reported that AG Menachem Mazuz has decided that there was insufficient evidence to try Ahmed Sa'adat, the former head of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) for his part in the 2001 assassination of tourism minister Rehavam Zeevi. Four other PFLP members, however, will face charges in connection with the murder. Israel Radio reported that Fuad Shubaki, who was involved in weapons smuggling and in the affair of the weapons ship Karine-A, will be tried in a military court.

The Jerusalem Post cited claims by volunteers, including Americans, that settler violence is rising against Palestinians in Hebron.

Israel Radio reported that Egyptian intelligence chief Omar Suleiman will visit Yemen to investigate the possibility that Al-Qaida activists who escaped from a Yemeni jail were involved in the Sinai bombings. Yediot reported that several senior position holders in the Egyptian intelligence services blamed Israel for the bombings.

Leading media reported that Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice made a surprise visit to Baghdad on Wednesday to express the USG's support for new Iraqi Prime Minister Jawad al-Maliki.

Yediot reported that the Syrian government sent a letter to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and to the current president of the UN Security Council, saying that the UN envoy to Lebanon, Terje Roed-Larsen, is taking a pro-Israeli stance. Yediot noted that former PM Ariel Sharon and other senior GOI officials had refused to receive Roed-Larsen, whom they viewed as anti-Israeli. Leading media reported that on Wednesday, President Bush authorized freezing the assets of anyone involved in the 2005 assassination of former Lebanese PM Rafiq Hariri.

Ha'aretz, Maariv, The Jerusalem Post, Hatzofe, and Israel Radio reported that Sweden called off its participation in international air force exercises ("Volcanex 2006") to take place in Italy next month because of the involvement of the Israel Air Force in the drills. The media quoted senior officials in Stockholm as saying: "Israel is not currently acting in the name of peace, and therefore, it should not take part in the demonstration." A Swedish Foreign Ministry official was quoted as saying: "The point of the operation is to prepare for international cooperation in preserving world peace. The participation of the Israeli air force changes the prerequisites of the drill." Swedish Defense Minister Leni Bjorklund was quoted as saying that her country is withdrawing because of the participation of a "state that does not take part in preserving international peace." Ha'aretz's web site quoted a GOI source as saying: "The lack of sympathy for Israel in Sweden is out of proportion. Some government ministers spearhead the most anti-Israel approach in all of Europe, and particularly in Scandinavia. In meetings between senior Israelis and Swedish ministers, the Swedes refuse to listen to Israel's positions."

Major media reported that on Wednesday, President Bush announced the nomination of Fox News host Tony Snow as

White House Press Secretary.

Yediot reported that State Comptroller Micha Lindenstrauss has reached the conclusion that Shimon Peres, no. 2 in Kadima, is suspected of illegal activity related to USD 320,000 in foreign donations he received in the Labor Party's primaries around six months ago.

All media reported that ex-minister Prof. Yuval Ne'eman, world-renowned physicist and former head of the Atomic Energy Commission, died Wednesday at age 81. He was among the founders of the campaign for retaining the land of Greater Israel.

Maariv and The Jerusalem Post reported that Microsoft will open a new R&D center in Tel Aviv. Maariv said that the American computing giant was "expressing confidence in Israel."

The Jerusalem Post cited a report released earlier this month by URCH Publishing [a British-based company] as saying that a boom in Middle Eastern pharmaceutical markets is imminent, although Israel may not be a beneficiary of the trend. The Jerusalem Post quoted the author of the report, Jean-Michel Saliba, as saying that "multinationals must be wary of the inadequate level of intellectual property rights protection in the region." The newspaper wrote that US pharmaceutical companies lose around USD 555 million, in the Middle East, alone, due to lack of patent protection. Yediot reported that American rock singer Lenny Kravitz will visit Israel for the first time this summer.

1. Mideast:

Summary:

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "It is hard to imagine more convenient political conditions for Olmert's convergence plan. If he does not hurry to take advantage of them, he will lose the opportunity and his plan will disappear into thin air."

Liberal op-ed writer Yael Paz-Melamed commented in popular, pluralist Maariv: "[A big cabinet] is bad, annoying, and costly, but if it is what will make the government implement its diplomatic plan, it's worth it."

Washington correspondent Shmuel Rosner wrote in Ha'aretz: "The US, exhausted in Iraq and preoccupied with its problems, is in no hurry to enter a futile face-off with the Kremlin, and will agree to pay a high price to avoid one. Part of it might be paid in Israeli currency. One cannot change this but rather just try to get used to it."

Block Quotes:

I. "And Thank You to Hamas"

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (4/27): "Interim Prime Minister Ehud Olmert needs Hamas more than any other player. From his point of view, a Hamas government that is weakened, lacks international backing and is hungry for assistance is the best alternative on the Palestinian side.... Before the elections, Olmert spoke about the rest of US President George W. Bush's term, until January 2009, as a 'window of opportunity' for carrying out the convergence plan. Bush's term now seems an eternity compared to that of the Olmert government, which is unlikely to survive until then.... Fatah enjoyed international support, which reduced Israel's freedom of operation. Hamas has no such status. Its refusal to recognize Israel, adherence to an extremist ideology and vocal support of last week's terror attack in Tel Aviv assist Israeli public relations. The internal struggle is preoccupying the Palestinians and freeing Israel to deal with its own issues. It is hard to imagine more convenient political conditions for Olmert's convergence plan. If he does not hurry to take advantage of them, he will lose the opportunity and his plan will disappear into thin air."

II. "Yes to a Big, Costly Government"

Liberal op-ed writer Yael Paz-Melamed commented in popular, pluralist Maariv (4/27): "The government that

Olmert is building -- at least it appears so -- is one that will allow the convergence move to happen, even if Avigdor Lieberman and 'Yisrael Beiteinu' enter the cabinet.... Olmert is turning the Labor Party and its leader into his senior partners in the government.... It transpires that in order to satisfy [Labor Party Chairman Amir] Peretz, he must be given seven ministers. This is bad, annoying, and costly, but if it is what will make the government implement its diplomatic plan, it's worth it."

III. "Facing the Kremlin"

Washington correspondent Shmuel Rosner wrote in Ha'aretz (4/27): "To understand what Stalin was doing, [George Kennan] believed [in 1946], one should go back to the days of the czar. Would he say today that to understand what Putin is doing, one needs to go back to the days of Stalin? 'The Russians have decided that the only way back into the arena is to be a spoiler,' a source in Washington said. And Israel, as an insect on the back of a galloping mammoth, can see the race track from above, but cannot affect the race. A lesson in humility for all who believe that Israel's fate is only in its own hands. Therefore, Hamas will be invited to Moscow, against the spirit of the Quartet's decisions (even if not in express opposition to them), and any diplomatic maneuvers against Iran also will get bogged down until the Kremlin's leaders are satisfied, or perhaps not. The US, exhausted in Iraq and preoccupied with its problems, is in no hurry to enter a futile face-off with the Kremlin, and will agree to pay a high price to avoid one. Part of it might be paid in Israeli currency. One cannot change this but rather just try to get used to it."

12. Iran: Nuclear Program:

Summary:

Intelligence affairs reporter Ronen Bergman wrote in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "The failure [to expose Iran's uranium enrichment program] rests mainly on the shoulders of the Mossad, but not exclusively."

Berlin correspondent Eldad Beck wrote in Yediot Aharonot: "Germany is responsible not only for preserving the memory of the Holocaust; it also bears a great deal of responsibility for the development of Iran's nuclear program."

Block Quotes:

1I. "Satellite or Balloon?"

Intelligence affairs reporter Ronen Bergman wrote in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (4/27): "Herein lies the great secret, which everyone is trying to conceal: The Israeli intelligence community (like the US and western European intelligence communities) has failed so far, aside from local successes, in thwarting the danger that it itself defines as the main threat to the state's wellbeing and existence. This is a double failure: Not only did Israel not prevent Iran from going nuclear, but throughout most of this period, it did not know enough about what was happening inside Iran. One example is the very-late discovery of the real route Iran chose to manufacture the bomb -- enriching uranium through centrifuges with Pakistani assistance, and not as was believed by Israel -- through upgrading the capabilities given to Iran by Russia by building the reactor in Bushehr. The failure rests mainly on the shoulders of the Mossad, but not exclusively. This is the sad truth, which even blaring headlines [about the new Israeli satellite] sponsored by the PR executives of Israel Aircraft Industries cannot succeed in changing."

II. "Good Hosts"

Berlin correspondent Eldad Beck wrote in Yediot Aharonot (4/27): "What is this dialogue that the Europeans are holding with the Iranians? A conversation criticizing the US. This criticism has been expanded to Israel as well.... Everywhere he goes, [German] Foreign Minister [Frank-Walter] Steinmeier condemns the positions of the Iranian President regarding the destruction of Israel and the denial of the Holocaust, but statements are one thing and actions are another. That is also the attitude of the German government toward Ahmadinejad's intentions to come to

the World Cup in order to support his team. 'He can expect criticism for his statements,' the German Minister of the Interior said, 'but he can come. We want to be good hosts.' When Israel made vocal demands to impose sanctions on the Iranian government for Ahmadinejad's statements and not to allow its national team to attend the World Cup, Berlin officials asked that the conflict with Iran not be made into a German matter, saying that sports are separate from politics. The Holocaust, which Ahmadinejad denies, was perpetrated by Germans. Allowing him to come to Germany is tantamount to spitting on the ashes of every one of the six million. But Germany is responsible not only for preserving the memory of the Holocaust; it also bears a great deal of responsibility for the development of Iran's nuclear program. In the mid-1990s Israel gave Chancellor Kohl a list of German companies that were helping the Iranians in their efforts to obtain an atom bomb. Very little was done to prevent this activity. Once the Germans finally got moving, it was usually too late."

13. Iraq:

Summary:

Liberal columnist Larry Derfner wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: "They call the Americans who fought World War II the Greatest Generation. I would call the Americans who won't be fighting in Iraq, or anyplace else, the Hollowest Generation."

Block Quotes:

"The Hollowest Generation"

Liberal columnist Larry Derfner wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (4/27): "The world's only superpower is at war, and its ruling class is manned almost wall-to-wall by 'chickenhawks' -- hawks by ideology, chickens by example.... The question is this: If you are not a pacifist, if you believe that your country needs an army and that occasionally, tragically, it may be necessary for it to go to war, why should somebody else and somebody else's son have to risk their lives in that army, but you and your son shouldn't? They call the Americans who fought World War II the Greatest Generation. I would call the Americans who won't be fighting in Iraq, or anyplace else, the Hollowest Generation."

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